

2
SIMPLE TRUTH
VINDICATED: K

IN 2

Sundry important Theological
Queries; which are examined
and resolved by the
Scriptures only:

Under FOUR HEADS;

NAMELY,

- I. The Knowledge of the True God.
- II. Exhortations to Faith and Obedience.
- III. The Nature and Effects of justifying Faith.
- IV. The Nature, Manner, and Evidences, of the Work of the Spirit of God on the Hearts of Men.

1 PETER iii. 15.

Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear: having a good conscience; that whereas they speak evil of you, as of evil doers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ.

L O N D O N :

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TO THE
READER.

MANY others besides Pilate have proposed the question, *What is Truth?* without having patience to wait for an answer, from him who was sent to bear witness of the truth, and whose voice every one that is of the truth hears. And when it is replied, “God’s word is truth,” it has seemed rather like adjourning or evading than answering the question; as it is immediately replied, *The most absurd imaginations have claimed this sacred sanction, by a pretence to evidence in the divine records.* But though the devil should come with, “It is written,” will that be any reason against our answering, “It is written again?” No lover of the scriptures can consent to the thought, that we have a standard of truth capable of being stretched or contracted by the wisdom of the Scribes and disputers of this world.

Yet some such thought must have given birth to the custom of appealing (with a neglect of the scriptures) to human symbols, as more determinate, and expressive, and to other human suffrages, as more intelligible and instructive.

*Hence it comes, that when some such question as, What is Truth? has risen in the mind, each party of professors have usually submitted to the answer given to it by the guides they severally most admire. The reader will find nothing of that here: the author being fully satisfied, the scriptures are able to make him wise to salvation, which is the only wisdom he at present thinks necessary. For this reason he has purposely avoided any shew of the wisdom of this world that cometh to nothing; nor will it give him any pain or offence, if the reader concludes he has nothing that will bear to be called by that name. As he has not written a line or sentence with intent to please any religious party in the world, so neither has he with design to displease any; therefore will think himself quite free to treat with neglect such (if any such there should be) who may please to be mightily out of humour. Such shall always be welcome to him, who say, "Be not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is:" but he must be excused for not holding the doctrines on
which*

which he thinks eternity depends, as matters of doubtful disputation: Their importance will warrant the warmest solicitude to hold fast the faithful word, and contend earnestly for it; keeping in mind, that what may seem a little difference in words, may tend to great and mischievous consequences in their effects, on the truths here contended for. As for instance; If we grant any tendency of the mind towards God, or the most feeble effort towards believing in an unbeliever, preparatory to, and qualifying him for acceptance with God; we give up this truth, "that it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy."

And this solicitude is the more necessary, as we are warned of some who should rise, even among the churches, who should "privily bring in damnable heresies," — (and it seems very acceptable to men too) for, "many shall follow their pernicious ways:" Nor do the scriptures warrant us to expect the many in any other than pernicious ways; though the leaders in them, still profess to adhere to the Lord the Redeemer; or else it could not be said, they privily brought in their heresy.

So that the following thoughts do not pretend to the favour of the world, whatever form it may assume; but every one that is of God will receive them as far as they perceive

ceive them consistent with that which is in truth the word of God; and they cannot with a good conscience bid them God speed any further.

As nothing can more fully prove a man to be of the world, than his speaking of the world, and being heard by it; so we have no other proof that we are of God, than our hearing the apostles; for he that heareth them, heareth Christ, so is one of his sheep. This indeed gives little hope of such an event, as a late writer seems to have thought he had some prospect of: “I will not despair, says he, of bringing men of wit, into a love and admiration of sacred writings; and I promise myself to see the day, when it shall be as much the fashion among men of politeness, to admire a rapture of St Paul, as any fine expression in Virgil or Horace; and to see a well dressed young man produce an Evangelist out of his pocket, and be no more out of countenance, than if it were a classic printed by Elzevir.”

As this is not the case at present with men of fashion, the author has no hopes of their patronage: Nor has he more to hope for from the men of devotion, who, conscious of the distinction they have obtained among men, are ready with solemn contempt, and a grave countenance, to suggest their honest suspicions of some deadly tendency in the following thoughts,

thoughts, to bring in another gospel than that they have received, or to loosen the bonds of duty, and obligations to obedience, for which they as stewards of the mysteries of God conceive themselves accountable. If any thing of this sort should happen, he has no other defence than, "Let God be true, and every man a liar." If yet there should be any danger from suspicion of more being intended than is expressed, I can only say, I conscientiously think "I have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully:" And therefore "have used great plainness of speech," endeavouring that all should know what I intended by what I declared. And if after all, some things be either inaccurately, or imperfectly expressed, it is that I could attain to; and I flatter myself it will be more difficult to fasten an exotic meaning to my words, than to understand them as intended. And if this be attempted, it must be because it does not suit every man publicly to oppose the things here contended for.

If the following remarks tend in any degree to the confirming the souls of the disciples, or excite any to ask seriously, *What hath the Lord spoken?* Or if they should be so far blessed by him, who teacheth to profit, as to turn any from the error of their ways,

or

or to shew any the snares of such, who by good words and fair speeches, deceive the hearts of the simple, my utmost desire is gratified; then, neither reader, nor author, have wasted their time or labour; but may both rejoice in the prospect of the day, when that which is in part shall be done away, and we shall know as we are known. This the author thinks is no presumption to hope for, as he well knows, the cause of Christ has usually been promoted, and the spiritual house edified, by such tools in his hands, as the world would not think worth using. That the following performance may prove this last remark to be true, is (for the reader's sake) the unfeigned prayer of,

THE AUTHOR.





SIMPLE TRUTH, &c.

I. Concerning knowledge of the revealed character of the true God.

ARE just conceptions of the true God essential to acceptable worship, and to eternal happiness? Yes. (But by just conceptions are not intended conceptions equal to his boundless perfections; but such conceptions of him as are conveyed to the mind by his own declarations in his word) If these are not essential to acceptable worship, we may worship we know not what, and present our services to an unknown God and yet be accepted; but, (a) “without faith it is impossible to please God, for he that cometh to God, must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.” Nor can any thing direct our addresses to, or support our hope in God, but a revelation of his perfections, as suiting our wants; for tho’ it be true, (b) “Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved;” yet it will be asked, “How shall they call on him in whom they have not believed?”

(a) Heb. xi. 6.

(b) Rom. x. 13, 14.
B and

and “how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?”

And as it is essential to our worshipping acceptably, so it must needs be to our *eternal happiness*; for, (c) “The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven, in flaming fire, taking vengeance *on them that know not God.*”

Do not all that profess to believe the scriptures know the true God? No; for they may yet be of the world, of whom Christ speaks, (d) “O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee.” And lest we should think by the world he meant the Heathens, he tells the Pharisees, who worshipped only one God, and hated images, and who were ready to say, “We have one Father, even God,” yet to them he saith, (e) “It is my Father that honoureth me, of whom ye say, that he is your God: yet *ye have not known him.*” From hence, he told his disciples, their opposition to his gospel proceeded; (f) “These things will they do unto you, *because they have not known the Father, nor me.*” Nor yet can we say, that all that profess to believe in Jesus Christ, know the true God. 1 Cor. xv. 34. “Some have not the knowledge of God, I speak this to your shame:” so that even members of gospel churches, gathered by the apostles, might

(c) 2 Thess. i. 8.

(d) John xvii. 25.

(e) John viii. 54.

(f) John xvi. 3.

be of the number of them, "that knew not God, nor obeyed the gospel."

Is the knowledge of the true God ever obtained, but by the special operation of his Spirit? No; (g) "for it is God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, *to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ.*" Besides, the Scriptures represent the human mind as averse to, as well as blind concerning the true God; which occasioned *Paul* to say concerning the gospel he preached, (b) "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God, to the pulling down of strong holds, casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself *against the knowledge of God.*" So that to know the Lord according to the Old Testament (i) promise, is to have our natural darkness dispelled, and natural pride subdued, which God only can do: without which being done (k) "we are alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in us, because of the blindness of our heart."

Does not he that has other notions of God than were exhibited when he was manifest in flesh, worship a false or an unknown

(g) 2 Cor. iv. 6.

(i) Jer. xxxi. 34.

(b) 2 Cor. x. 4.

(k) Ephes. iv. 18.

God? Yes; for (l) “No man knoweth the Son but the Father : neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.” Yet they may retain the name, and claim relation; as the children of *Israel* proclaimed a feast to the Lord, when they made the calf.

To this manifestation of the true God, *John* refers, as that alone which could secure them, or can secure us, from idolatry; for a man may set up his idol in his heart, without having one of wood or stone in his house; or may worship a false God, without a graven image. He therefore says, (m) “We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding that we may know him that is true : *this is the true God*, and eternal life. Little children, keep yourselves from idols.” As no man can have any knowledge of God, but from God himself, therefore (n) God proclaimed his name before *Moses*, and manifested his name (or that by which he would be known) in the person of Christ; who says, (o) “I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it, &c.” And as he is called the (p) *image of the invisible God*, it follows, we can have no just conceptions of, so pay no acceptable worship to God,

(l) Matt. xi. 27.

(n) Exod. xxxiv. 6.

(p) Col. i. 15.

(m) 1 John v. 20, 21.

(o) John xvii. 26.

but

but as we are instructed by this manifestation. And no man can worship a false God, without renouncing the true.

Did the distribution of the divine favours, when God was manifest in flesh, appear to be chiefly made to the characters most highly esteemed amongst men? No; for he that was to manifest the divine perfections declared to them that justified themselves before men, (q) “That which is highly esteemed amongst men, is abomination in the sight of God.” And in consequence of this declaration, (r) “The world hated him, because he testified that the works thereof were evil.” It cannot be supposed they hated him for testifying that murder, adultery, rapine, &c. were evil; in this they were of his mind: but it is plain their anger arose from his contempt of what they were proud of; therefore when he spake of opening blind understandings, they tartly replied, “And are we blind also?” When he spake of the freedom he came to proclaim, they presently shew surprise, and say, (s) “We be Abraham’s seed, and were never in bondage to any man; how saist thou then, ye shall be made free?” Here was the offence; and its consequence was, (t) “Publicans and harlots went into the kingdom of God

(q) Luke xvi. 15.

(s) John viii. 33.

(r) John vii. 7.

(t) Matt. xxi. 31.

before them." Thus he made foolish the wisdom of this world, and stained the pride of all their glory, while he received sinners and eat with them, and was known to be a friend of publicans and sinners; and yet not so as to leave room to suspect that the pride and self-dependence of the Pharisee, was invincible to his omnipotence; for *Paul* was such a trophy of all-conquering grace, as fully to evince the divine character to be, as expressed in that declaration, *I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy*. And indeed every act of mercy recorded of God incarnate, is calculated to display the sovereignty of grace, in relief and salvation being brought to the miserable, guilty, and helpless.

So that such professors as deny this part of the divine name, cannot be said to know the true God, as he was manifested by the acts of sovereignty that appeared in those displays of mercy which Christ gave, and wherein he declared, (u) "What things the Father doth, the same doth the Son likewise:" So are not at present partakers of that promise, "They shall all know me from the least to the greatest."

Is not the revealed character of God, the only ground of our trust and confidence in him?

Yes: (w) "We must know whom we have

(u) John v. 19.

(w) 2 Tim. i. 12.

believed,

believed, or else we cannot be persuaded he is able to keep that we have committed to him." For this reason God proposes that character to our view, under which we may look to him for salvation, *Iſa.* xlv. 21, 22. "There is no God else besides me, *a just God, and a Saviour*; there is none besides me. Look unto me, and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else." So the persons are described by the ground of their hope: "The (x) Lord also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble; *and they that know thy name* will put their trust in thee:" Certainly not all that know he is called Jehovah, &c. but all that know him under the character of a refuge for the oppressed. In this respect (y) "the name of the Lord is a strong tower, the righteous runneth into it, and is safe." On this account we so often read such expressions as these, "Let them that *love thy name*, be joyful in thee. According to *thy name* so is thy praise, O God, unto the ends of the earth. For *thy name sake* lead, pardon, &c." Now if there were not incentives to love, trust, and praise, contained in the divine revealed character or name, these expressions would be utterly unintelligible; but if the divine name be thus understood to signify God's revealed character, we see how it be-

(x) Psal. ix. 9, 10.

(y) Prov xviii. 10.

comes a plea for pardon, guidance, &c. as it is all the promises in epitome; and pleading for his name sake, is pleading the grace revealed in his name. For the same reason Christ is called *the Name of the Lord*, as he is “the express image of his person, and brightness of the Father’s glory,” as in him we behold a glorified man, exercising every divine perfection under the engaging character of Saviour of men.

As the favour of God is life, and every man’s conscience witnesses it is forfeited; *Will not every mistake about the means of regaining it, amount to a denial of the only Lord God?* Yes; (z) “If there be no other name given among men whereby we must be saved, but the name of Jesus,” he that trusts any other way of regaining the favour of God, denies that he is (a) “well pleased for his righteousness sake;” so receives not the testimony from heaven, but makes God a liar, “in that he believes not the record he hath given of his son, nor that he hath made us accepted in him the Beloved.”

Nor does he believe God’s report concerning mankind, that “they (b) are all gone out of the way, they are together become

(z) Acts iv. 12.

(a) Isa. xlii. 21.

(b) Rom. iii. 10—18.

unprofitable, there is none that doth good, no not one."

Now as this is God's testimony of his Son, and of us, and of our acceptance for his sake, there can no mistake happen about this, but he that makes it must deny absolute justice; as he will suppose acceptance to rise partly, at least, from partial obedience and imperfect services; (not to say, as I might, when performed with this view, from things that are abomination in the sight of God) so that his God is not the *just God*, and the Saviour: Nor in his view is it *merely of God that sheweth mercy*; for he conceives that God is "altogether such an one as himself," able and ready to help the well-disposed, but one that has no favour for the utterly worthless and abandoned; so, in fact, neither just nor merciful in perfection. But none that know God can say, This is he whose *grace* brings salvation.

Now, except it could be said that a man may own the true God, and yet deny his revealed character, and conceive of him opposite to the truth of the "mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ," we cannot say better to him than, (c) "Curst be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, whose heart departeth from the Lord;" for "though he

(c) Jer. xvii. 5.

say he is his God, yet he hath not known him."

Besides, if he may know the true God, and yet mistake about acceptance with him, it will follow he may have eternal life in his mistake, and consequent rejection of the Beloved; for if he knows God, (d) "This is life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." But if the knowledge of the way of acceptance with God, is inseparably connected with, and a part of, the saving knowledge of him, he that has it not, does not believe that Jesus is the Christ, so cannot in his present mind, by believing, have life through his name; of such we may say, as *Hosea* v. 4. "Their works will not permit them **לֹא יָתִנוּ מַעַלְלֵיהֶם** to turn to their God; for the spirit of whoredoms is in the midst of them, and *they have not known the Lord.*" Whereas all that know the Lord, thankfully accept the caution, "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches." (e) "But let him that glorieth, glory in this, *that he understandeth and knoweth me*, that I am the Lord, which exercise loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth: For in these things I delight, saith the Lord." Nor (but for the sovereignty with which divine

(d) John xvii. 3.

(e) Jer. ix. 24.

favours are dispensed) can he that hath received an understanding to know him that is true, conceive how it is that Christ will manifest himself to him, and not to the world.

Can he be said to know the true God, who does not obey him? No; (f) “for hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.” “He that saith I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.” It is true, there have always been some (g) “who profess that they know God, but in works deny him, being abominable and disobedient, and to every good work reprobate.” Yet, it is no less true, (h) *He that doth evil hath not seen him, neither known him.*” Nor will the obedience of such as know the Lord, be like that of those men who (i) “feared the Lord and served other gods.” For he that gave them understanding to know him that is true, has also taught them to do *all things* whatsoever he hath commanded them.

And as they (k) “escape the pollutions of the world, thro’ the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; so their joy in this service is all from this knowledge, as, (l) “Grace and peace is multiplied to them,

(f) 1 John ii. 3, 4.

(h) 1 John iii. 6.

(k) 2 Pet. ii. 20.

(g) Tit. i. 16.

(i) 2 Kings xvii. 33.

(l) 2 Pet. i. 2.

through

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through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus their Lord: According as his divine power hath given them all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that called them to glory and virtue." So that (z) "fruitfulness in every good work, is the constant attendant on increasing in the knowledge of God."



II. *Of exhortations to faith and obedience.*

A*RE unbelievers to be exhorted to obedience to God's commandments? Yes; whatsoever is matter of duty, is subject of exhortation; and it is every man's duty perfectly to keep the commands of God. We are therefore to remind them that God says, (a) "Repent, and turn yourselves from your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin. Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed, and make you a new heart, and a new spirit; for why will ye die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God: wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye."* And we may encourage to diligence herein, by imitating *Moses* describing the righteous-

(z) Colos. i. 10.

(a) Ezek. xviii. 30—32.
ness

ness which is of the law, "that the man which doth these things shall live by them." For thus Christ answered the question of the young Ruler, (b) "What good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life? If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments." For there is no promise of life to the doing of any good thing, except all the commandments be kept; as "he that offends in one point is guilty of all," so falls under the curse that belongs to him that continues not in all things. So that exhortations to any duties less than perfect obedience, as a means of obtaining that life that lies in God's favour, have no Scripture warrant: as there can be no medium between obtaining life by that obedience that has the promise of life annexed to it, and receiving it of *free gift*; not by working at all, but believing in him that justifies the ungodly. (c) "For the *wages* of sin is death: but the *gift* of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord."

But when unbelievers are convinced they cannot perfectly keep the commandments of God; *May they not be exhorted to some duties, as means of obtaining that faith by which the just live?* No; the Scriptures no where describe the duties by which faith is *acquired*, nor exhort to any duties, as the means of

(b) Matt. xix. 16, 17.

(c) Rom. vi. 23.

obtaining

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obtaining a saving interest in Christ. The Scripture exhortation to such as perceive the justice of God, and their own deficiency, is, “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ;” while yet it constantly affirms the faith of such as do believe (*d*) “is the gift of God,” who (*e*) is found of them that sought him not:” so that if God gives them to believe who were not seeking him, it is plain they had used no preparatory endeavour, nor ever *desired to believe*; nor is it possible any unbeliever can desire to believe the Gospel, though he desires ease of mind; if we consider, the person exhorted is an unbeliever yet. Now the state of his mind must be this, ignorance of the Gospel-hope, and enmity against its truths. Is it possible that he should wish to believe what he doth not understand, or wish to embrace what he hates?

Now if any works were previously necessary to obtain faith, the thief on the cross, the jailor, &c. and indeed all Scripture conversions, were defective therein; for they had none but bad ones: nor is it possible these preparatory works should be good ones, as (*f*) “without faith it is impossible to please God.”

(*d*) Ephes. ii. 8.

(*f*) Heb. xi. 6.

(*e*) Isai. lxxv. 1.

Besides,

Besides, What hinders the convict from believing immediately on his finding himself miserable? Nothing but a desire to obtain some distinction that should give the Gospel-promises some direction towards him in particular; but when he has obtained this (or thinks he has) and believes by virtue of it, What does he believe? Not on him "that is able to save to the uttermost all that come to God by him;" for this is believing in him that justifies the ungodly, and would have suited him without any encouragement taken from his imagined reformation, and would have produced a real one.

What then does he believe? Why, he firmly believes he is become a much better man than he was; and therefore is now in a much more hopeful way than formerly. And this is a natural consequence of any duties being performed as the means of acquiring a justifying faith, (or what we are taught to call so) that he who in this manner is following after righteousness, will certainly be led to take his encouragement to believe his own interest in the Gospel, from those things which distinguish him from the altogether worthless, or from his former self. So that we cannot speak of preparatory works of any sort, or any qualifications for believing (except guilt be
one)

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one) without making the Gospel a law of works. For, (g) “To him that worketh, is the reward reckoned not of grace, but of debt; but to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.” For boasting is excluded, not by the law of works, but by the law of faith; but it cannot be excluded if any thing done by us sets us in a more probable way of obtaining that salvation that is of grace, whether this be called by the names of a *law work*, *serious exercise of seeking souls*, or *labouring to obtain an interest in Christ*; &c. and if ever such attain to the righteousness which is of faith, they will certainly find what they were not seeking for, nor in any the most distant manner hoping for, or labouring after; and will see all their former labour worse than idleness, and (b) “esteem it dung, that they may win Christ, and be found in him.”

But are not unbelievers to be exhorted to read the word of God, and hear it preached, to pray, give alms, be thankful for their enjoyments, &c.? Yes; whatsoever appears to be the duty of every man, is the subject of universal exhortation: But why these particular duties singled out? Is it not the

(g) Rom. iv. 4, 5.

(b) Phil. iii. 7, 8.

duty of every man (i) “to love the Lord God with all his heart, and soul, and mind, and strength, and his neighbour as himself?” Why then must we abridge the divine law to a few external observances, which may be attended to with all that self-dependence that attended the Pharisee’s giving tithes of all that he possessed? for, after all, I am afraid that race of men will yet exceed any thing we shall see of this sort. If by the law is the knowledge of sin, why should we be afraid to urge its utmost extent? Certainly the duties above-mentioned have not by themselves the promise of eternal life annexed to them, and are much easier performed than making themselves a new heart, which yet the law of God calls for. And while we single out these or such like, without any Scripture warrant; and promise on God’s behalf, that while they are thus employed, promised and purchased grace will compleat and perfect the well-meant though feeble effort of nature; we are certainly leading persons to think of those duties as easier terms and conditions than perfect obedience for acceptance; and putting them in the way of beginning and carrying on a good correspondence with God, by their good motions or good meanings. Nor need we be afraid of

(i) Luke x. 27.

despair following our urging the necessity of perfect obedience, so long as we have liberty to add, (k) “through Christ is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of *Moses*.” Thus *Peter* perceiving *Simon* the forcerer to be in the gall of bitterness, and bond of iniquity, preaches repentance as his immediate duty, and the forgiveness of sins as his only hope. (l) “Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray unto God, if perhaps the thought of thy heart may be forgiven thee. For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity.” Here we have a Scripture precedent for exhortations to unbelievers; and we may observe in it, a declaration of his state, “Thy heart is not right in the sight of God; I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, &c.” This was declaring him guilty, and in a state of enmity against God, and slavery to sin. What must he do now? Attend preaching more constantly, &c. The Apostle says nothing about any external attendance, though that will follow believing; but, “Repent of this thy wickedness, and pray unto God, &c.” Now all must grant, faith is essential to Gospel-

(k) Acts xiii. 38.

(l) Acts viii. 22.

repentance,

repentance, and to acceptable prayer; so that this exhortation is only, Repent, and believe the Gospel; which is also the account *Paul* gives of his ministry, *Acts* xx. 21. "Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." Repentance is necessarily connected with a sight of God's justice, and of our guiltiness; and both of these are shewn us by the law: so that to preach repentance, is not to preach some social, relative, or religious duties; but to remind them of the judgment to come, and to keep in view the divine righteousness, which will be manifest against all ungodliness, and unrighteousness of men; for (*m*) "God hath commanded all men every where to repent: because he hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness." These are addressed to the conscience, to excite fear of divine justice and vengeance: but exhortations to believers are urged by the mercy that appears in the promises they believe, so excite love as well as fear, where love is: but we cannot to any purpose say, "Having these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves," to such as do not believe the promises. Thus we see, Scripture exhortations to unbelievers, if not sen-

(*m*) *Acts* xvii. 30.

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sible of their inability, are, “*be perfect; if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments;*” for men perceive not their inability without seeing the law exceeding broad. If they appear sensible of their guilt and danger, as “by the law is the knowledge of sin,” then it is, (n) “*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.*” And that they might repent, and believe the Gospel, the Apostles constantly testified, that (o) “those things which God before had shewed, by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled; (to which they add their exhortation) “*Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out.*” Nor is the repentance they exhort to, ever separated from faith as the source of it; for repent ye *therefore*, would have no force with such as did not believe the facts from whence the *therefore* is deduced, viz. that God had fulfilled in Christ’s sufferings, what he had foreshewn by the prophets. Nor would they, by whose wicked hands he was crucified and slain, have been (p) “pricked to the heart” for it; if they had not believed assuredly that God had raised him from the dead: for “they did it through ignorance, as did also their Rulers;” therefore, it is

(n) Acts xvi. 31.

(o) Acts iii. 19.

(p) Acts ii. 37.

evident

evident their repentance was an immediate fruit of faith: so that no argument for exhortations to works preparatory to believing, can be found in these.

But are not exhortations expressing great activity and labour, addressed to unbelievers? Such as, “*Strive to enter in at the strait gate; Fly for refuge; Labour for the bread that endureth to everlasting life; For the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force, &c.*” *Are not these, addresses to unbelievers, and expressive of diligence to obtain a saving interest in Jesus Christ?* No. The only way to determine this, is by regarding the several contexts, and observing to whom the address is made. All that shall appear to be addressed to believers, will be granted to be quite out of the question; as they are not the subjects of the present inquiry, but unbelievers who are supposed to desire to believe, or seek to obtain an interest in Christ, or pray for a new heart, or the like, in order to justification. *Luke xiii. 24.* “*Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able. When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know*

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know you not whence you are : Then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drank in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets. But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence you are ; depart from me all ye workers of Iniquity." It is obvious from these, and the following verses, that the strait gate here is not the gate of regeneration, but the gate or door, *i. e.* entrance, into the kingdom of God ; the striving to enter therefore must be (q) " fighting the good fight of faith, and laying hold of eternal life ;" to this kingdom and glory, he tells them " an abundant entrance shall be ministred to the Gentiles, who shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south ;" while they, who, on account of their religious attainments and privileges, seemed to be the children of the kingdom, should be cast out." So that it is a caution against presuming on special relation or attainments, by which many strive to enter in, and are not able. Hence it appears, this exhortation is addressed to such as profess to believe, as a caution against false dependencies ; for the question to which it is a reply, *viz.* " Lord, are they few that shall be saved ?" evidently implies the enquirer's faith in the salvation about which he enquired. This therefore
is

(q) 1 Tim. vi. 12.

is no argument for any imaginary striving to believe, any more than that reply to the foolish virgins, coming after the door was shut, and saying as here, (r) “ Lord, Lord, open to us.” Such cautions to believers abound in the word of God, on purpose that “ they may fear, lest (a promise being left them of entering into his rest) any of them should seem to come short of it.” So *Matt.* xi. 12. “ From the days of *John* the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force,” *i. e.* they that believed *John* the Baptist, testifying this is the Son of God; and according to his exhortation, beheld him as “ the Lamb of God taking away the sin of the world ;” overcame every opposition. (s) “ And this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith; for, Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?” This therefore is addressed to believers, as they are described, *verse* 15. “ He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.” So when *Paul* speaks of believers as having “ fled for refuge, to lay hold on the hope set before them:” It plainly supposes, that they believed the report of the refuge as safe and accessible, and saw the hope set before them, previous to their flying to lay hold on it; for men cannot fly to a refuge they know not of,

(r) *Matt.* xxv. 11.

(s) 1 *John* v. 4, 5.

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nor could any thing of which they had no hope, be called the hope set before them. So again, *John* vi. 27. "Labour not for the meat that perisheth, but for that meat which endureth to everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you." This appears by the context to be a reproof of their carnality who sought Christ for bodily nourishment, which they believed him able to give; while yet his miracles did not convince them that living bread was only to be enjoyed as his gift: and the labour for this that is exhorted to, is explained to be no other, than *believing on him whom God hath sent*; so is only an exhortation to believe him as able to give the bread of life, as they saw and acknowledged he was to give temporal bread, without any of their labour or tillage; as he did the manna to *Israel* in the wilderness. And it also intimates, if they believed this, they would be ready to shew the same diligence, in consequence of such believing, as they did in consequence of believing he could give them bread for their bodies. Like this is that exhortation to the disciples, *Matt.* vi. 33. "Seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you:" Which evidently supposes faith in the persons exhorted. Nor can I find any exhortations in the scriptures, but what suppose a previous knowledge

ledge of, and faith in the things to be sought after, fled to, or laid hold on: so that none of these appear to be exhortations to any of those things which are supposed to precede faith, but either exhortations to believe, or incentives to the work of faith in believers.

When a person is distressed with a sense of guilt, and fear of punishment, may we argue from thence, any encouragement to him, in preference to the careless and profane? No; for convictions are no infallible symptom of conversion; as it often happens that convictions, though very poignant, end in a more greedy following iniquity, or in pharisaical self-dependence: so that we cannot gather infallibly from them, that God hath begun that good work in them, which he will perform till the day of Jesus Christ; for it is much to be doubted whether what they call hatred of sin, may not be only hatred of punishment.

Besides, the gospel-tidings are absolutely free, requiring no conditions, but guilt in the objects of grace; so that the gospel considers no occasional differences in them it relieves, as if any thing in them was an encouragement to believe, or a discouragement in the way of believing. Its encouragements are all taken from itself, as equal to the worst case, and leaving no room for the vilest

to despair, as it reaches to the uttermost, and is *exceeding abundant*. This appears by the description it gives of the guilt and misery of them it relieves, who are considered as (1) “stout-hearted, and far from righteousness, (u) spending their money for that which is not bread, and their labour for that which satisfieth not;” as *prisoners, slaves, lost, dead, &c.* Now none of these respect them meerly, nor principally, as under convictions, but only as guilty and miserable; but if any encouragement was to be taken from their convictions, we should find such as may be encouraged to believe, described by this characteristic, as weary of their sins, and hungering and thirsting after righteousness. Nor do the horrors of mind, that sometimes preceed believing, appear to be any part of the duties of the law, but rather of its curse. The jaylor’s trembling (w) and astonishment, seem to have afforded no part of the consolation he received, by the apostle’s exhortation and information, “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved;” for, he “rejoiced believing in God;” so it was only from the gospel of God, that his consolation came. Nor does it seem possible, his distress can be esteemed a preparatory work,

(1) Isa. xlv. 12.

(u) Isa. lv. 2.

(w) Acts xvi. 27—31.

unless we can suppose, a man with his sword drawn to kill himself, can be encouraged to believe by any argument drawn from such a frame of desperation. I deny not, but a sight of danger does sometimes preceed a sight of deliverance, in *order of time*, and that it must always do so *in order of nature*; i. e. though the same truth, and at the same time set home to the mind, may shew both ruin and recovery; yet believing in Christ for salvation, supposes conviction that we are lost: but yet I must deny, that any terrors of mind, previous in point of time to believing, are essential to true conversion. It has been observed, the three thousand converts must be allowed to have believed *Peter's* testimony of the resurrection; or else, what was it they repented of, when they were pricked to the heart? Now we are assured, "if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus Christ, and believe in thy heart, that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved;" so that it seems they had saving faith, conveyed by the same piercing truth that pricked them to the heart, and by which they were encouraged to (x) "look on him they had pierced and mourn;" on which faith, *Peter* exhorted them to be baptized. Nor is their question, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?"

(x) Zech. xii. 10.

the language of desperation, but of duty and obedience, as *Paul* in the like case said, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" The same thing appears by the relation of the calling of *Zaccheus*, the *Eunuch*, *Lydia* and others, who all appear to have had their hearts opened to receive the word, both of conviction, and consolation, at the same time: So that all their experiences followed believing.

Again, if the convictions a person has in his conscience are any ground of encouragement, I would ask, *Can a person convinced of sin, and not comforted by the gospel, be said to believe it?* Certainly no; for the reason he is not comforted by it is, he is not convinced Christ is "able to save to the uttermost;" that his grace is sufficient to forgive such enormous guilt, without some previous amendment or pious resolutions in him; for all that believe these "glad tidings of great joy which are to all people," (y) "enter into rest," or "have peace with God," only from the tidings they have heard and believe; as we always find in the New Testament, "they rejoiced, believing in God," or "gladly receiving the word," "went on their way rejoicing, &c." Now,

If he is not a believer (however he may say he desires to believe) what promise have we to propose to unbelievers? Or what can

(y) Heb. iv. 3.

we say more to such, than we can to all the world? (z) “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned:” there is only this advantage, a person arrested by the hands of justice, may be more attentive to the proposal of favour from his sovereign; yet if to believe and love him be required, the arrest perhaps has rather increased his enmity to him, than conquered it; so that we can only say, as *Paul* in the same case, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved,” and this we may say to all to whom the gospel comes.

May anything be proposed to quiet a guilty conscience, besides or together with that which satisfieth justice? No; for nothing short of the blood of Christ, can (a) “purge the conscience from dead works to serve the living God;” nor can the heart be “sprinkled from an evil conscience,” or they that worship God, obtain perfection of conscience any other way; nor may any thing be added to it for these purposes; for as nothing is joined with it in taking away guilt, so nothing can be joined with it to take away fear. This is the ground of the “better hope whereby we draw nigh to God,” having (b) “the answer of a good conscience toward God, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.”

(z) Mark xvi. 16.

(a) Heb. ix. 9, 14.

(b) 1 Pet. iii. 21.

But, may not such as are supposed to be believers, though under doubts and fears about their state, be encouraged to hope by reflecting on their past experiences of joy in the ways of God? Or, may they not be referred, for the evidences of their adoption, to past testimonies of the Spirit thereto? No; for except we could suppose fears that do not arise from guilt, we cannot suppose hope that does not arise from the atonement. The apostle John says of believers, (c) “ We have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin;” by which cleansing from sin, it is evident he intends the removal of the guilt of it, and the fears that attend it, from the conscience; and therefore directs little children who know the Father, to look to his blood when under guilt. (d) —“ If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, who is the propitiation for our sins.” And the apostles all consent to point out the same source of consolation, saying, (e) “ We joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.” Nor can I find that the apostles ever refer them to past experiences, to remove the suspicions that might arise from consciousness of disobedience; nay, they

(c) 1 John i. 7.

(d) 1 John ii. 1, 2.

(e) Rom. v. 11.

unanimously

unanimously agree to excite those suspicions in this case, that they may never be stifled until they are fairly removed by what (if they are believers) gave them their first confidence. In this case, the question which produces anxiety is, Am I a partaker of Christ? To which the apostles do not reply by asking, "have you never experienced the drawing out of your heart towards him, and the assistance of his Spirit in duties, with a firm persuasion of your interest in him and love to him, attended with fervent determinations to serve him?" &c. Though all this might be true, yet he does not answer the question thus, but, (f) "Ye are made partakers of Christ, if ye hold the beginning of your confidence stedfast to the end." It is certain, their first confidence was only in the blood of Christ, and this he calls "the confidence and rejoicing of hope," and asserts this same confidence must be held to the end, or else they are (g) "moved away from the hope of the gospel;" so that if any thing be proposed to our attention besides this, it must be drawn off from this, and when it is so, we do not (b) "walk in Christ Jesus the Lord as we first received him," which must certainly be without any medium of past ex-

(f) Heb. iii. 3.

(g) Col. i. 23.

(b) Col. ii. 6.

periences, to magnify our hope by looking through them.

Suppose the doubting person, under consideration, be a believer, and has been favoured with the witness of the Spirit of God, that he was a child of God; it is certain, this is an abiding relation, and such "are not appointed to wrath, but to obtain salvation;" yet when this testimony of the Spirit is withdrawn (and withdrawn it must be, if the believer has tormenting fears) in this case, to suppose the conclusion to be formed, by reflecting on this as a former enjoyment, is to suppose the mind capable of getting the same consolation and evidence without this witness, as with it; for he can only know he is a child of God *by this testimony*, and it cannot be supposed he should attain to know it *without it*. And if he cannot, then references to past experiences, can do no real good to believers in this case. For it must be kept in mind, fears and doubts, arise from guilt and disobedience, so must in their own nature suspend the witness of our own spirits to our adoption; so that to make out our heirship, without either the witness of the Spirit of God, or our own spirits, is like proving a fact without evidence. And as guilt is the parent of fear, fear cannot be removed, but by guilt being put out of sight; which
to

to do by past experiences, is to put them exactly in the place of the atonement. So that, as far as I see, the best use a believer can make of his experiences, is by them to recollect what was his first confidence and refuge, and cause him to say to God, (*i*) "Because thou hast been my help, therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice." Nor will he be any great loser, if he be driven to conclude all he has experienced may have been delusion, seeing it is true of Christ still, with respect to him as well as others, (*k*) "HE is able to save to the uttermost." But men hold the remembrance of the past workings of their minds, from which they conclude themselves believers, as though they were the beginning of their confidence, and seem as if by them they were encouraged to stand before God with less shame, and with more boldness, or on better terms (though they have sinned) than such as have no good dispositions, so no ground of hope, but the meer atonement: Though I am far from thinking this to be any alleviation, but rather an aggravation of the guilt that burdens the mind of a believer, seeing it aggravates the ingratitude of his sin; nor can he (however carried away by customary expressions) ever be relieved, but from the atonement alone.

(*i*) Psal. lxiii. 7.

(*k*) Heb. vii. 25.

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But may not men be deceived in their experiences? Yes; and so many have been, and have “thought themselves something, when they were nothing, deceiving themselves.” If we consider experiences, with respect to the emotions produced in the mind by *hope*, or *fear*, we may find in scripture, as well as in our own observation, the most striking effects of this sort, altogether destitute of the faith that worketh by love, or any other of the things that accompany salvation. Have we rejoiced in, and been affected with the gospel testimony? lest this should be made our confidence, the Lord Jesus spake the (1) parable of the sower, and in it points at some that “heard the word, and anon with joy received it, yet dured but for a while; for when tribulation and persecution arose, because of the word, by and by they were offended.” In this case, only time and trial could prove, they were not “rooted and built up in Christ, and established in the faith, as they had been taught.” But the revolution that happened in the synagogue of *Nazareth*, *Luke*, chap. iv. exemplifies this in a less time, and in a manner not to be exceeded. The preacher was Christ himself; his subject, the most interesting manifestation of divine grace, in his mission and offices; his

(1) *Matt. xiii.*

auditory were all attention. “ *The eyes of them that were in the synagogue were fastned on him.*” And when he said “ *This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears,*” they all bore him witness, *i.e.* were all ready to own him for the promised Messiah, and with extasy of soul, “ *wondered at the gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth.*” Now, would the Lord Jesus have stopt here, he would have had a plentiful harvest of followers; but he perceives a mistake in their apprehensions of the divine grace, and, instead of keeping out of sight a truth which he knew would offend them, even the divine sovereignty, in the fullest expressions of it, in the dispensations of grace, (as is now industriously done, from such as seem under the first religious impressions) he proceeds to set aside all the pretensions of claim by relation to him, which by the scope of Christ’s reply, seems to be hinted in their saying, *Is not this Joseph’s son?* and shews that the distribution of the divine favours, were not in the least governed by the distinctions that obtained amongst men, but were bestowed by a sovereign hand, and usually on such, where it was not in the least expected. This they could not bear, but “ *all they that were in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, and rose up, and thrust him out of the city; and led him to the brow of the hill,*

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bill, whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong." This sufficiently shews how uncertain any evidence must be, taken from such emotions of mind, as even *Herod* felt, when he heard *John* gladly, or *Felix*, when he trembled at hearing of a future judgment. The danger of this kind of self-deception, seems to have occasioned most of the apostolic warnings and cautions; which all proceed on this supposition, that a person (*m*) "may be enlightened, and taste of the heavenly gift, and be made partaker of the holy Ghost, and may taste the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come," and yet remain destitute of the things that accompany salvation, and "bring forth thorns and briers, and be nigh unto cursing." Hence such frequent cautions, (*n*) "to take heed lest there be in any of them (whom he calls brethren) an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God;" and exhortations to "fear lest a promise being left of entering into his rest, any of them should seem to come short of it" Hence that jealousy, (*o*) "lest as the serpent beguiled *Eve* through his subtilty, their minds should be corrupted, from the simplicity that is in Christ." Nor can a more subtil corruption of the mind

(*m*) Heb. iii. 12.

(*n*) Heb. iv. 1.

(*o*) 2 Cor. xi. 3.

be pointed out than this, of making past experiences the medium of our confidence, in the blood of Christ; or the ground of our hope of pardon, and salvation by it; for if they may deceive us, as we see it is, at least, possible, he that is so deceived, and dies in the deception, is sent down to hell with a lie in his right hand. Nor is there any need of this medium, since the gospel testimony carries in itself, sufficient ground of hope, and occasion of joy, to every one that believes it, without any thing wrought in us, or done by us, to give it a peculiar direction towards us; and if it does, (and certainly the joy of first believing can have no such medium) though I never believed it until now, yet what shall hinder me now from having peace with God, through the Lord Jesus Christ, and having access by faith into this grace? Shall my having been to this day, a deceiver and an hypocrite? Not if he is "able to save to the uttermost all that come to God by him;" for surely none will say, there is more danger from despair, by giving up all past experiences, than there is from presumption, in resting on them; for if our hope is not fixt on them, despair cannot follow parting with them; and if despair does follow parting with them, it is full evidence, they, and not Christ crucified, were the ground of
our

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our hope. So that we can understand the repentment against this, as only resuming the old complaint, “*Ye have taken away my gods, and what have I more?*” But, (p) “hath a nation changed their gods, which yet are no gods? but my people have changed their glory, for that which cannot profit.”

But must all addresses to the consciences of men, whether of caution, or consolation, be directed and warranted only by the word of God, exclusive of every other recommendation? Yes; (q) if we would be followers of the apostles, and “mark them that walk so, as they have them for an example;” for they (r) “renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth, commended themselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God.” So that they did not consider the sacred message as a dead letter, needing to be animated with the life and spirit of their address; nor ever by giving vent to their own religious affections, aimed to invigorate the hearts of the hearers: they knew all their success depended on their hearers (r) “receiving the word of God, which they heard of them, not as the word

(p) Jer. ii. 11.

(r) 2 Cor. iv. 2.

(q) Phil. iii. 17.

(s) 1 Thess. ii. 3, 4, and 13.
of

of men, but (as it was in truth) the word of God." Therefore, far from thinking addressees to the passions, or the pride of their hearers, an ordinance of God for good, "they sought not glory of men;" (z) "their speech and their preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: that their hearers faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God." For they well knew, if their hearers did not hear God speaking, their most mournful or animating tones, or florid addressees, could not unstop deaf ears, though it might secure votaries to the powerful preacher, and procure the advantages connected with acceptance.

III. *On the nature and effects of justifying faith.*

*I*S justification in any sense whatsoever by our works either of body or mind? No;

"(a) for by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in the sight of God.

"(b) Boasting is not excluded by the law of works, but by the law of faith."

(z) 1 Cor. ii. 4.

(a) Rom. iii. 20.

(b) Rom. iii. 27.

We

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We may therefore conclude with the apostle, (c) “that a man is justified by faith, without the deeds of the law;” and so (d) “justified *freely* by the grace of God, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.”

But is not faith, or believing, a work of the mind? No; for if it is, it must be a work of the law, as the law respects the thoughts and intents of the heart, or else unbelief would be no breach of the law; for where there is no law there is no transgression. Now if the faith that justifies, be considered as a work or deed of the law, then we are justified by a deed of the law. But the Scriptures consider faith, not as a work of ours, or as any action exerted by the human mind at all, but set it in direct opposition to every work, whether of body or mind. (e) “Now to him that worketh, is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.” This contrast excludes every idea of activity in the mind, from the matter of justification. It is easy to see how faith may work with the works of him that believes, in every act of love and obedience; but how the mind of an unbeliever should act to get

(c) Rom. iii. 28.

(d) Rom. iii. 24.

(e) Rom. iv. 4, 5.

faith,

faith, or please God without it, does not appear; yet if believing consists in any activity of our minds, towards the truth to be believed, previous to believing it, this must be admitted: Nevertheless, unbelief, as an active rejection of the testimony of God, may stand opposed to faith, as a passive reception of it. (f) When the people followed Christ, because they eat of the loaves and were filled, he reproved them, that while they shewed by their following him, they believed that he could give them bread for their bodies, yet they believed not that he had meat to give that endured to everlasting life. This bread which he was to give, they understood to mean, some instruction about what they were to do “to work the work of God,” and by that obtain the meat that endures to everlasting life: Jesus retorts the phrase they had used about working the work of God, telling them the work of God is, “to believe on him whom God hath sent,” of whom they should receive the bread of life without any work of theirs, as *Israel* did the manna without their labour and tillage. And it seems, though he used their phrase, they understood him to say, that he was to do all that could be called working, and they to live by him, on believing on him, as *Israel* of

(f) John vi. 26. See p. 24.

old

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old did; and therefore they ask, "What sign shewest thou then, that we may see, and believe thee? What dost thou work?" Thus they conceived him, not as correcting their mistake about the right sort of works, but setting aside their works altogether. This will appear more fully to such as will read the whole connection from *ver. 22* to *ver. 65*.

But is justifying faith no more than the divine testimony passively received?* No; for it is called receiving the love of the truth, and represented by opening blind eyes, and unstopping deaf ears, raising the dead; &c. (g) for the words that Christ speaks, "they are spirit and they are life;" and he says, (b) "Verily, verily I say unto you, he that heareth my words, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life. Verily, verily I say unto you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live." Now if passing from death unto life, is the dead hearing the voice of

* Passive reception is the best phrase I can find, to exclude all activity of the mind towards the saving truth, previous to its taking possession of it by almighty power alone.

(g) John vi. 63.

(b) John v. 24.

the

the Son of God, to suppose any activity here, is as absurd as to suppose *Lazarus*, making some feeble efforts to rise, before Christ said, "*Lazarus*, come forth;" but being dead, he was not able to accomplish any thing, till almighty power seconded him, and compleated the business.

Is the faith of God's elect, or justifying faith, distinguished from the faith of them who believe only for a time, by any thing but the thing believed? No; for, as believing is no more than receiving the divine report, record, or testimony, unbelief can be no more than rejecting it; (i) "as he that hath received his testimony, hath set to his seal, that God is true;" so he (k) "that believeth not God, hath made him a liar, because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son." As to the *manner* of believing there can be no difference, whatsoever be the thing believed; for whatever tidings we hold for true, we believe in the same *manner* as we do God's testimony; with no other difference than what arises from the infallible veracity of its Author, and evidence of the truth: so if we (l) "receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater." As to the distinction between believing in the head,

(i) John iii. 33.

(k) 1 John v. 10.

(l) 1 John v. 9.

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and believing in the heart, if men would give themselves time to reflect, the absurdity is too glaring not to be perceived : for let them first point to some fact, which they believe in their heads, and yet disbelieve in their hearts, before they any more urge the distinction. Now if that which constitutes the difference between saving faith, and believing in vain, be the *manner* in which we receive the truth, then it is not what we receive that justifies, but our manner of receiving it. But when *Peter* would describe the faith of God's elect, he does it only by describing *what*, and not *how*, they believe: (m) "*To them who have obtained like precious faith with us, in the righteousness of our God and Saviour, Jesus Christ.*" And we are authorised by *Paul*, to say of them that (n) "receive not the love of the truth, that they might be saved," that "they *believe not the truth*, but have pleasure in unrighteousness." This appears to have been the case with all, of whom it is recorded in the Scriptures, that they believed with only, what is called, a temporary faith; it appears, I say, in the account of them, that they received and held some falsehood together with the truth, which was subversive of it; as *Paul* supposes the case of some of the Corinthians, who, it seems, held

(m) 2 Pet. i. 1.

(n) 2 Thess. ii. 10—12.
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the resurrection of Christ in such a manner, as to deny the very import of that fact; viz. "that he was the first-fruits of them that slept," and so would "raise us up also, and quicken our mortal bodies." Now if any among them said there was no resurrection of the dead, by holding this error, they in fact denied Christ's resurrection, and made their faith vain; he therefore says, 1 Cor. xv. 1, &c. "Brethren, I declare unto you the Gospel which I preached unto you, which also you have received, and wherein ye stand. By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, *unless ye have believed in vain.*" So that if this was their case, it would appear, they had not *heard the word of God and understood it*; which is the difference our Lord points out, (o) between them that received the seed of the word into good ground, and others that only dured for a while. The same will appear to be the defect of others who are said to believe, which yet were not saved; as *Agrippa* believed the Scriptures of the Old Testament, as the Jews also did, in some mistaken sense of them; for it is certain, (p) "if (in their true meaning they had believed *Moses*, they would have believed Christ, for he wrote of

(o) Matt. xiii. 20, 23.

(p) John v. 46.

him,"

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him.” So (q) *Simon Magus* believed, and was baptized, yet with such a mistake in his faith, as to leave room for him to think in his heart, that the gift of God might be purchased with money.

Neither in these, nor I think, in any other instance, does the defect of their faith lie in the least in the *manner of believing*, but in the *thing believed*; and therefore we find the apostles always diligently inculcating the truth, or shewing them *what* to believe; but never, as I recollect, lay down any rules *how* they should believe: a strange defect, methinks, if the essence of believing aright, consists in the *manner* of doing it; for how should men proceed in examining whether they be in the faith, without an infallible rule to try it by? But if the essence of faith be *what* we believe, the whole word of God is our rule, and if (r) “ we speak, or think, not according to this word, it is because there is no light in us.” Yet the essence of justifying faith, is often in scripture reduced into so short a compass, as to be expressed by a single sentence.

But can all that is essential to the saving truth, be included in a single sentence? Yes; and in this much of its beauty consists, as it may be savingly known without a train of reasoning, and acceptably confessed in one

(q) Acts viii. 13.

(r) Isa. viii. 20.

word,

word, equal to the brevity, with which *Peter* and the *Eunuch* made their confessions. Yet we may observe, these single sentences are so connected, as to shew they are designed for compleat definitions of justifying faith; and are given as rules by which our faith is to be examined, and as maxims, to which every perversion of the gospel, is more immediately or more remotely opposed. Take for an instance, 1 *John* iv. 1, 3. — “Try the spirits, whether they are of God. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is of God. And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is not of God.” This is our rule; to understand which, it will not be sufficient to say, that the apostle *John*, wrote in opposition to certain heretics, who denied the incarnation; for if they denied it in express words, they could need no rule, by which to prove that professed Jews, or Heathens, were not Christians; nor, if this was all, was there any need to assert, that *every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is of God*: the negative form of the third verse, seems plainly sufficient to cut off all such supposed heretics; as the positive form of the second, shews it is a definition of the faith that is of the operation of God; as he asserts, he that has it is
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of God. This will oblige us to understand the confession of the incarnation of Christ, to include in it, a confession of the import of that fact ; and a denial of it, must also take in all that detracts from what the scriptures shew to be the intention of it. For no man can be said to confess that Jesus is come in the flesh, that denies the scripture-account of the intent of his coming.

The import of this fact may be deduced briefly thus. Did God provide a Saviour? Then men need one, so were lost. Did he come in the flesh? He that came *in flesh*, must be distinguished from the flesh in which he came, so must even be "God manifest in flesh." Was such his dignity? Then God was infinitely just in demanding such a satisfaction, and infinitely merciful in providing and accepting it. Was he *in flesh*? This implies relation to, and substitution for the "children, that partake of flesh and blood, &c." If God sent his Son, in the likeness of sinful flesh, "to seek and save that which was lost;" without doubt, he finished the work the Father gave him to do. If he finished it, such as seek to add to it, refuse to depend on it, or cannot be comforted by it alone, in effect deny it. In like manner, all true faith is summed up in the testimony God gave of his Son, the import of which is, 1 *John* v. 11. "This is the record, that
God

God hath given to us eternal life :” and this life is in his Son. To believe this, is true faith, and an evidence of adoption ; for, chap. iv. 15. “ Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God.” But none believe this, that mistake its meaning, or oppose its inseparable consequences, which are such as follow, *viz.* If he is the *Son of God*, he is both God and man ; if the *beloved Son*, he is holy, harmless, undefiled, &c. if God is *well pleased in him*, he was not well pleased with men without him. If he that did no sin, died for sin, and yet was the beloved Son, it must be imputed to him : If sin was imputed to him, the righteousness of God may also be imputed to sinners : If he was well pleased in him, justice was satisfied, and atonement perfected : If atonement was perfected, he that believes not the sufficiency and freedom of this grace, “ maketh God a liar, because he believeth not the record God hath given of his Son ; (for) this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life : and this life is in his Son.” Now as this testimony was confirmed in the resurrection, to believe that, includes or supposes believing this ; and therefore, “ if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thy heart that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be

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saved.”

saved." For God raised him from the dead, and gave him glory, that our faith and hope might be in God.

In like manner it is said, "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God:" For that character (the Christ) includes all that the Jews of old expected in their Messiah, all that God had promised, and that fallen man needed. I am far from supposing, that I have hinted at all the particulars included in the belief of the facts, or the testimony above taken notice of. A specimen only was intended. Yet it seems sufficient to account for a similar passage, 1 Cor. xii. 3. "No man can say that Jesus Christ is the Lord, but by the holy Ghost." For "every tongue that confesseth that Jesus Christ is Lord, (does it) to the glory of God the Father. Now it cannot be doubted but that he that *is of God, in whom God dwells, who is born of God, and who shall be saved*, has justifying faith: Nor can any man shew that it is described by any thing in these instances, (where it is considered distinct from its fruits) but by the truth believed, the center of which is the divine testimony; from which all the doctrines of the gospel have their importance, in proportion to their nearness of connection with it: and to which, every error is either immediately or more remotely opposed;

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as all error may be proved to deny that faithful saying, "that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners." In short, whatever fully expresses the sinner's good hope, before a just and holy God, is the saving truth; against which every error militates, and in which every believer rests.

But can the record of God passively received be said to justify? Yes; certainly, as well as if actively received: Except our activity therein have any hand in our justification. Faith justifies *in the sight of God*, no otherwise than as it respects, and is a name for, the thing we believe in, or as it is a name for the object of faith. Thus it is used, *Rom. v. 1.* "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God" Here it seems no more than another word for the same thing; as, *ver. 9.* "Being justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him." Thus the thing believed, *viz.* "Christ delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification," is imputed for righteousness; and justifies, as it makes an atonement, so blots out the charge laid against us; so "(s) by him, all that believe are justified from all things, from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses." But then, this record justifies *in the conscience*, as it presents to their minds an imput-

(s) Acts xiii. 39.

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ed righteousness, equal to all its demands, in the fullest view of the divine law and justice; (t) “even the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ, unto all, and upon all them that believe; for there is no difference.” When this (u) “testimony of God, that he hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son, —When this testimony, I say, is presented to the mind (w) “with power, and with the holy Ghost, and with much assurance,” and so received there as the word of God; it is like the declaration of the judge himself, of the innocence of one that had stood charged with crimes deserving death. Thus the indefinite declarations of pardon, speak peace to them that believe.

But if justifying faith be no more than believing God, may not men believe as the devils do, and have no more benefit from it than they have? No; The truths of God are the torment of devils, but the salvation of men. We believe that (x) “for this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.” The devils believe this to, and say, (y) “Art thou come to torment us before the time?” but will any say, the belief of this is no more

(t) Rom. iii. 22.

(w) 1 Thess. i. 5.

(y) Matt. viii. 29.

(u) 1 John v. 11.

(x) 1 John iii. 8.

benefit to men, than to devils? (z) “We believe that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners of mankind;” Satan believes so too, but he does not believe that he came to save devils: but certainly these truths may have different effects; as a tyrant may believe, that a powerful Saviour is coming to set his slaves at liberty, and put an end to his tyranny, with vengeance on him for his cruelty: The slaves also may hear, and believe it; but will both receive it alike? No: while the tyrant (a) believes and trembles, the slaves (b) believing, rejoice with joy unspeakable.

It will not be easy to shew, that when with the heart man believes to righteousness, he then knows or believes any truth that the devils do not believe, or in any different way from them; only in that he receives the love of the truth which Satan hates, and so rejoices in that at which devils tremble. He therefore that can shew that the salvation of the devils is promised in the truths they believe, shall have my consent to call their faith, justifying faith. The apostle *James*, when he speaks of the devils believing, is not disputing about the manner of believing; but shewing the absurdity of pretending to true faith, without

(z) 1 Tim. i. 15.

(b) 1 Pet. i. 8.

(a) Jam. ii. 19.

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producing fruits to prove it such. Now if we compare the devil's confession of his faith, with *Peter's*, we shall find them the same. *Luke iv. 41.* "Devils came out of many, crying out, and saying, *Thou art Christ the Son of God.*" Now hear *Peter*, *Matt. xvi. 16.* *Thou art Christ the Son of the living God.* We read, that *Jesus* rebuked the devils, and suffered them not to speak; for they knew that he was Christ: but to *Peter* he said, "Blessed art thou, *Simon Barjona*; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." Therefore of men it is said, (c) "Whosoever shall confess that *Jesus* is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God." And yet, this is no more than the devils confessed. So that it seems we need not be frightened at the name of a diabolical faith; as long as we are not devils, but men, to whom the Father has revealed his Son, and men too whose nature (d) Christ took hold on, when he took not hold on that of angels.

But is not this faith attainable by any man, and actually attained by many, who yet appear not by their fruits to have the faith of God's elect? No; for (e) "no man knoweth the Father but the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him." Now if they

(c) 1 John iv. 15.

(e) Matt. xi. 27.

(d) Heb. ii. 16.

cannot

cannot know the Father without such a manifestation of him as is not made to the world, it is certain they cannot believe in him without it. Nor is it any objection to this, that faith is only the believing God's testimony; for men cannot believe what they do not understand; and (f) "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." However easy it is to make such a confession as *Peter* did, and however insignificant some may think it to believe it; (g) "yet flesh and blood did not reveal it to him:" but as it came from the Father, the blessing of Jesus attended it. It is true, a difference may have place, between what men profess, and what they believe; so that it may not be easy to shew any defect in the confession they make: but it is (h) "*with the heart* man believes to righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made to salvation." And therefore if they bring not forth fruits, to prove that they really believe what they profess, we may say, (i) "they have not heard him, nor been taught by him as the truth is in Jesus." No man can be said to have "like precious faith with the apostles," unless he hold the same truths, have the

(f) 1 Cor. ii. 14.

(h) Rom. x. 10.

(g) Matt. xvi. 17.

(i) Ephes. iv. 21.

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same object, and bring forth the same kind of fruits: And this cannot be, until (*k*) “God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in their hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ. It is “the entrance of the divine word that giveth light; it giveth understanding to the simple.”

Now until wisdom from above entereth into the heart, or the light of the knowledge of the glory of God be given, we may say a man cannot know the true God; (for it is life eternal to know him) and therefore cannot be said to believe him: Nor does it seem possible for an unbeliever, to admit among his approved principles, the account God gives of the utter depravity and helplessness of human nature; yet this is essential to believing the divine testimony, (*l*) “that God is well pleased in his beloved Son.” But, wherever the defect be, where there is a *true* profession, and yet a fruitless life, this is certain, (*m*) “He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and *the truth is not in him* :” *i. e.* he doth not know the truth; for if he did, and it dwelt in him, it would (as a new set of principles in common life) produce a new course of actions; for

(*k*) 2 Cor. iv. 6.

(*m*) 1 John ii. 4.

(*l*) Matt. iii. 17.

“where-

(n) “wherever the word of the truth of the gospel comes, it brings forth fruit in them that receive it, from the day they hear of it, and know the grace of God in truth.”

Is no kind or degree of appropriation, or personal assurance, included in the nature of justifying faith? No; for if any thing constitutes faith of the right sort, or justifying, arising from the manner our minds are employed about it; then it is not the *thing believed* alone that justifies, but the *manner* of believing that constitutes it true faith. Nor is anyone’s personal interest in salvation, declared in that truth which he that believes not shall be damned. It is the duty of all that hear the gospel to believe God’s declarations in it, and he that believes them not, makes God a liar; but it is not declared there, of any particular person, either by name, or any infallible sign that can be seen on his first believing, that he in particular shall be saved. So that, as it cannot be essential to faith to believe what God hath not spoken; neither can it be the duty of all who hear the gospel, to believe that Christ loved *them*, and gave himself for *them*; unless this be true of all who hear it: and if it is, then universal redemption, and universal salvation are so too.

(n) Col. i. 6.

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It is true, the gospel report gives abundant ground of rejoicing when it is first believed; but then this joy arises only from the view of the sufficiency and freeness of the salvation that is by Christ Jesus, even that his grace is sufficient for the most guilty, and open to embrace the most miserable of *Adam's* race. And in this they rejoice, *in hope* of the glory of God; while yet the man cannot be assured his faith shall not fail, on some future trial; as he sees many concerning the faith, have made shipwreck: This shews him it is necessary to maintain a fear, "lest (a promise being left of entering into God's rest) he should seem to come short of it." Nor can this fear be properly removed, until it is (o) "cast out by love being perfected." So that no man can be assured his faith is genuine, until its fruits prove it so. Thus *Peter* exhorts to (p) "add to faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity: For if these things, faith he, be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren, nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." He therefore adds, "Wherefore the rather,

(o) 1 John iv. 18.

(p) 2 Pet. i. 5.

brethren,

brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: *for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall.*" These things therefore will prove (and it cannot be proved without them) that (q) "We are not of them that draw back to perdition, but of them that believe to the saving of the soul." For, I doubt not, but every one who can say with the apostle, (r) "I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God; I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God;" may add with him, "*who loved me, and gave himself for me.*" But if this was the privilege of all, at their first believing, I do not perceive any room for consequent exhortations, to (s) "shew diligence, to the full assurance of hope to the end," if they obtained it at the first believing; nor for (t) "examining whether they be in the faith," if faith can be proved to be true, before it be fruitful. Now as all men act according to the principles that bear the sway in their minds, actions will ever be a proof of their principles; though their professions may not be conformed to them. That which proves my obedience to the truth, will

(q) Heb. x. 39.

(s) Heb. vi. 11.

(r) Gal. ii. 19, 20.

(t) 2 Cor. xiii. 5.

prove

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prove my belief of it ; and that which proves my belief of the saving truth, proves also that I shall be saved ; for “ he that believes shall be saved.” And that which proves me a believer, is also a proof that the doctrines I have received are the truth, and no lie ; as they have such effects as nothing but divine truth could produce.

IV. *On the work of the Spirit of God.*

CAN any of the things that accompany salvation be wrought in the heart of a man by any other agent than the holy Spirit of God? No ; for the things which God hath prepared, he hath revealed unto us by his Spirit : and the things of God knoweth none, but the Spirit of God. The Spirit quickneth, the flesh profiteth nothing. Man, with the utmost abilities and talents, can only be furnished naturally with (u) “ the wisdom of this world, which cometh to nothing,” when employed about the things of God. If we are born of God, we are born of the Spirit ; so in no respect, (w) “ of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” And as Christians receive this transition from death

(u) 1 Cor. ii. 6.

(w) John i. 13.

to

to life, (x) “by the washing of regeneration, and *renewing of the holy Ghost* ;” so their establishment and edification is from the (y) “God of hope, filling them with joy and peace in believing, that they may abound in hope, *through the power of the holy Ghost* :” for which reason the holy Spirit is called (z) “*the Spirit of wisdom, and revelation* in the knowledge of Christ.” And as the will of God is their Sanctification, this also is his work, as the *holy Spirit*, on them whom (a) “God hath chosen to salvation, *through sanctification of the Spirit* unto obedience :” for it is the character of Christ’s disciples, that (b) they have “purified their souls in obeying the truth *through the Spirit* ;” or that they are (c) “sanctified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and *by the Spirit of our God*.” And as God has provided “strong consolation for them, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before them ;” so it is by his Spirit he communicates to our minds the reason and support of everlasting consolation, and good hope : for which reason the holy Ghost bears the engaging names of *the Comforter*, and the *Spirit of promise* ; as he presents to the mind the things of Christ, proposed in

(x) Tit iii 5.

(z) Ephes i. 17.

(b) 1 Pet. i. 22.

(y) Rom xv. 13.

(a) 1 Pet. i. 2.

(c) 1 Cor. 6. 11.

the promises, which are all yea and amen in him; and by them, as they describe, and flow from the love of God, gives such confidence, that our (*d*) hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts, by the holy Ghost." "Thus wisdom's ways are made ways of pleasantness;" and "the kingdom of God within us," appears to be "righteousness, and peace, and joy of the holy Ghost." So that, whether we regard regeneration, sanctification, edification, or consolation, we must say, (*e*) "All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ."

Does the Spirit of God perform any saving work on the hearts of men but by the word of God? No; for however the mind may be alarmed, and the attention engaged, by providences, &c. yet only the word of God in the Spirit's hand, maketh believers; nor is any thing besides the truth used by him, to cleanse, guide, feed, comfort, or confirm them in the christian character and life. This appears evident, if we attend to all the things said in the scripture to be done by the Spirit of God.

Believing, in the very nature of the thing, supposes a testimony to be believed; and we find all them for whom Christ prays, are

(*a*) Rom. v. 5.

(*e*) 2 Cor. v. 18.

such as (f) believe on him through the apostles word." And when the change of mind and affections attending this, is pointed to, the instrument by which the change is wrought is asserted to be the (g) "word of God, which they heard of the apostles; which word they received, not as the word of men, but (as it was in truth) the word of God, which also wrought effectually in them." So that it was (h) "of his own will he begat them *with the word of Truth.*" And the principle of spiritual life in them that are born again, is (i) "the incorruptible seed of the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever; even that word that by the gospel was preached unto them." Therefore the seals of *Paul's* apostleship are described as such whom he had (k) "*begotten through the gospel.*" So then, (l) "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God; for how should they believe in him of whom they had not heard?" If this be called a new creation, it refers our mind to the Old, in which, "He spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast." Or, if it be compared to raising the dead, that also is done by the dead *bearing the voice of the Son of God.*

(f) John xvii. 20.

(h) Jam. i. 18.

(k) 1 Cor. iv. 15.

(g) 1 Theff ii. 13.

(i) 1 Pet. i. 23.

(l) Rom. x. 17.

For

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For this reason, as the Spirit works only by the word of God, he is called the Spirit of the truth, or the Spirit of faith.

Edification is also by the truth, as it is by it we are built together (especially in church union) for an habitation of God through the Spirit: Or, if compared to trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord for his own glory, or a garden, or a field that the Lord hath blessed, the nourishment is by the word. (*m*) “As the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth: *so shall my word be*, that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.” By this the divine life is maintained; for “man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God” This is suited to the weakest, who (*n*) “as newborn babes desire the sincere milk *of the word*, that they may grow thereby.” Nor have the strongest in faith any other support; for though *Timothy* had from a child known the holy scriptures, which were able to make him wise to salvation; yet he could only be a good minister of Jesus Christ, by being

(*m*) Isa. lv. 10.

(*n*) 1 Pet ii. 2.

“nourished

(o) “nourished up in the words of faith, and of good doctrine.” And by this only is (p) “the man of God made perfect, thoroughly furnished to every good work.”

Sanctification of the Spirit is also accomplished by belief of the truth; as all gospel obedience is obedience to the truth, and every Christian hath purified his soul in obeying the truth through the Spirit: which shews the reason of Christ’s prayer, (q) “Sanctify them through the truth:” And again, “For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also may be sanctified through the truth.” Nor indeed have we any *rules* for obedience, nor sufficient *motives* to it, but in the word of the truth of the gospel. Hence, when Christ describes the subjects of his kingdom to *Pilate*, he saith, (r) “Every one that is of the truth, heareth my voice;” i. e. so heareth it, as to distinguish it from a stranger, whom he will not follow, but flee from him: And he heareth it so as to obey it, for “he heareth his sayings, and doth them; and doth not call him Master and Lord, without doing the things he saith: nor does he count them hard sayings; as the words he speaketh are, “a light to his feet, and a lanthorn to his paths.” This then is the only mean of sanctification, that

(o) 1 Tim. iv. 6.

(p) 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17.

(q) John xvii. 17, 19.

(r) John xviii. 37.

66 *On the work of the Spirit of God.*

the scriptures point out to us ; as (s) “ this is the victory that overcometh the world, even your faith ;” and to overcome that, is to be conquerors over the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eye, and the pride of life, which are all that is in the world. This is God’s appointed mean of sanctification ; for (t) “ Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it ; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water, *by the word.*”

Consolation must also be founded on, and communicated by the word of God ; as that alone contains glad tidings of great joy to all people : So when God’s word is found, and they eat it, *his word* is to them the joy and rejoicing of their hearts ;” for the Spirit of truth shews the things of Christ, when he performs the work of a Comforter ; which things are revealed or recorded only in the scriptures : nor could we ever know what were the comforts of the holy Ghost, if he spake not by, and according to the apostle’s words, or if he did not speak to us, the same truths he did to and by them ; for this is the apostolic rule, (u) “ Every one that is of God, heareth us. Hereby know we the Spirit of truth, and the

(s) 1 John v. 4, 5.

(t) Eph. v. 25, 26.

(u) 1 John iv. 6.

Spirit of error." And the experience of Christians testifies, that when they have been in distress, (w) "he sent *his word*, and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions:" Nor have his consolations been small, when they received the word in much affliction, with joy of the holy Ghost. It is certain, the joy of *faith*, or joy and peace *in believing*, must arise from, or be conveyed by, the tidings believed.

Is there then no vital principle or new nature implanted in believers, distinct from, and prior to the word of God dwelling in them? No; for it is by (x) "the great and precious promises, we are made partakers of the divine nature." And the incorruptible seed of spiritual life, is the word of God; as we also are begotten by the word of truth. Now unless we can think of a principle of animal life, separate from, and prior to the seed of generation, distinct from the nature of which the animal partakes, and prior to its being begotten: the metaphors are not proper; or they forbid us to speak of inherent grace separate from the words of Christ dwelling in us. Thus Christ points out the difference between his enemies and his disciples; to the former, he

(w) Psalm cvii. 20.

(x) 2 Pet i. 4.

says,

says, (y) “Ye seek to kill me because my word hath no place in you.” To the latter, he saith, (z) “If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.” The chief objection I can think of to this, is this; Christ has declared of little children, or infants, “that of such is the kingdom of heaven:” But “except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God;” therefore regeneration must be altogether independent on the indwelling truth; forasmuch as infants cannot receive, because they cannot understand the words of Christ. So that the argument stands thus, they may enter the kingdom of God, therefore must be regenerate, which cannot be by the word; so must have a divine principle, or new nature implanted, without any thing to do with the word.

To this I would oppose another argument, by which I shall obtain the objector’s assistance to answer the former. “He that believeth not, shall be damned:” as infants cannot understand, they cannot believe; therefore must be damned. If the objector should reply, this conclusion cannot be applied to infants, because Christ has declared, “of such is the kingdom of

(y) John viii. 37.

(z) John xv. 7.
heaven;”

heaven," I grant it: but by what rule then must the former? Had we not better consider God's word, as written for the use of such as can read it, without perplexing ourselves with speculations about such as cannot? We are sure, however, among adult persons, (a) "those he will have to be saved, he will also have to come to the knowledge of the truth."

But are not faith, hope, and love, distinct inherent graces, separate from the indwelling truth? No; for the most that such an inherent principle could amount to, if granted, separate from the indwelling truth, would be a disposition or readiness in the human mind, to believe the gospel, hope in its promises, and love him; it describes even before the entrance of that word, that gives the sinner light to know what he is to believe, so shews him the things to be hoped for, and describes to him the object to be loved: Which supposition, (if it be not as unintelligible to others as it is to me) has however this insuperable objection in the way of it, that if it be a separate, it must also be a previous principle; and so it supposes the principle of that faith by which the just live, to be in the dead sinner, before he hears the voice of the Son of God, and

(a) 1 Tim. ii. 4.

lives. Or it supposes a person to have faith in its principle, that did not come by hearing the word of God.

But that the truth that dwells in the heart of him that believes it, should be the principle of faith, hope, love, and obedience, seems intelligible and scriptural. Ask the Christian, why he believes he may be accepted in the Beloved; his answer is ready, “Because God hath declared himself well-pleased in him; which declaration of God is my faith.” Ask him, why he hopes for eternal life; he will say, because *(b)* “God that cannot lie, hath promised it before the world began.” Ask him, why he loves God; and he will tell you, because he hath commended his love to us; and said, *(c)* “Yea I have loved thee with an everlasting love.” Ask, why he walks in the ordinances of God blameless; the answer is, *(d)* “He hath heard and been taught of God, as the truth is in Jesus; therefore puts off concerning his former conversation, the old man, which is corrupt, &c.” Thus it is in common life. Good tidings believed may be said to be our faith: As they inform us of some future good, believing them produces hope of the things promised: And if the good things promised, are to come of meer grace; be-

(b) Tit. i. 2.

(c) Jer. xxxi. 3.

(d) Eph. iv. 21.

believing the tidings of them will produce love to him that gives them: which love will be manifested in readiness to do all things whatsoever he commands them. These will be augmented by greater degrees of knowledge; for (e) "believers grow in grace, only as they grow in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." Instruction in this, gradually (f) perfects that which was lacking in their faith: And when their faith groweth exceedingly, then also their love towards each other aboundeth. So likewise hope is promoted by the "God of hope, filling them with all joy and peace in believing, that they may abound in hope, through the power of the holy Ghost." Thus it appears, that hope, love, &c. are only different names, descriptive of the different influences and effects of the truth, known and believed; which may be called the *unfeigned faith that dwells in us*: And it also appears, that these are promoted by an increase of divine (g) knowledge; as the joy of faith, rejoicing of hope, and the comforts of love, are effects of "receiving the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ, the eyes of our understanding being enlightned, that we may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the

(e) 2 Pet. iii. 18.

(f) 1 Thess. iii. 10.

(g) Eph. i. 17.

faints."

faints.” Here it appears, all we can know of Christ, or of what we are to hope for, and rejoice in, comes from the Spirit, as the *Spirit of revelation*, and enters the mind by the *eyes of the understanding*. The like may be said of those expressions which speak of Christ dwelling in believers ; as we are expressly told, he (b) “ dwells in their hearts by faith :” They amount to an assertion, that the power and influences of Christ, on the lives of believers, are exerted by the instrumentality of the truth, believed in the heart. This also is called a *new heart* ; which expression, being metaphorical, denotes a new principle of life. For as out of the heart are the issues of life, in the animal economy ; if a new heart could be placed in the animal body, of different capacities and powers, so performing its operations in a different way from the old one ; the whole body, with all the animal functions and works, must differ in conformity to it ; which difference would be considerable enough to be called a *new creation*, and the animal thus changed, would be a new creature. All this the indwelling truth is the instrument of, when God performs his promise, (i) “ I will put my laws in their hearts, and in their minds will I write them.”

(b) Eph. i. 17.

(i) Heb. x. 16.

So that we may consider faith, or the truth believed, as the source of all that is acceptable to God, and profitable to men. And, as all the christian's joy and peace comes *by believing*, we may be assured, the ground of his joy is contained in the truth he believes. Nor can he think that any emotions of his mind, or ferment of his passions (however pleasing they might seem) ought to be called the presence of God, unless the delineations of his love, as drawn in his word, are present to his mind. Nor can he think any motions he feels in his heart, should be esteemed the influences of the Spirit of God, unless some truth be conveyed to his mind, which he did not see before, for his *instruction*; or impressed with its evidence and importance for his *confirmation* therein, or for his *support* under burdens and fears; that (k) "when his afflictions abound, his consolations also may abound by Christ Jesus"

But as the Spirit of God, in his work of Comforter, is said to be a *witness*, *earnest*, and *seal* to believers; *Are his operations that are thus described, performed by the word of truth?* Yes; for these are expressions descriptive of his work as the Comforter, which he performs by "taking the things of Christ, and shewing them to us:" but the

(k) 2 Cor. i. 5.

things he shews, are described only in the word; for he reveals no new things of Christ, only presents to the mind the things that (l) “are written, that we might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing, we may have life through him.” Therefore, whatsoever the Spirit speaks privately as a Comforter, can only be known to be his voice, by its being agreeable to what he speaks publicly in the word. So that what he spake by the apostles, is the rule to “try the spirits, whether they are of God.” Keeping this in our view, we may understand how he *bears witness to our adoption, gives us an earnest of our inheritance, and seals us to the day of redemption*: For (m) “though eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath laid up for them that love him; yet he hath revealed them to us by his Spirit.” In this he acts as the Spirit of those consolatory sayings, which Christ spake to his disciples; and so (n) “brings all things to our remembrance, whatsoever Christ hath spoken to us.” Thus, does he witness to our adoption? It is to give us the comfort of such sayings of Christ, as this, (o) “I will not leave you Orphans, I will come to you.” Does he

(l) John xx. 31.

(n) John xiv. 26.

(m) 1 Cor. ii. 10.

(o) John xiv. 18.

give an earnest of our inheritance? It is as the Spirit of that promise, (p) “ I go to prepare a place for you; and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also.” Does he seal us to the day of redemption? It is but marking us for the salvation designed for them, to whom he says, (q) “ Fear not, little flock, it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.”

As a witness he testifies to a *fact*, which is, that we are the children of God, and consequently, “ heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ.” Now this is a character nowhere drawn, but in the word of God; so that no testimony concerning this fact can amount to evidence of it, but as it points out the scripture character of a child of God, and shews our conformity thereto. As to the joint testimony of the Spirit of God, and our spirits, or consciences, it is a testimony that we have the *Image* and *Spirit* of his Son, and consequently the life which none have but such as are born again. For instance, the word saith, (r) “ Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God.” All men are conscious what they hold to be true; which consciousness,

(p) John xiv. 3.

(q) Luke xii. 32.

(r) 1 John v. 1.

is the witness of our spirits. But this witness needs to be supported, as it will yet admit a doubt, whether the person sufficiently understands the scripture import of this truth, that Jesus is the Christ; for until I am satisfied I receive this truth *in the sense of the scriptures*, I cannot be satisfied that I do believe it, nor conclusively argue from it that I am born of God. To remove this doubt, and adjoin the divine testimony to that of my own spirit, the holy Spirit of wisdom and revelation, enlightens the eyes of my understanding, to perceive more fully the evidence and import of this truth; so that I cannot but conclude, I believe it as the apostles did, and consequently, have like precious faith with them.

They that are born of God are described by their *love and obedience*, in such words as these, (s) “*Every one that loveth, is born of God, and knoweth God;*” and are directed to look for the fruits of his love, in obedience to his new commandment; in respect of which, it is said, (t) “*In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doth righteousness is of God.*” Here the question is, Have I that love of God, evidenced by obedience to him, by which they that are born of God, are here described? The witness of

(s) 1 John iv. 7.

(t) 1 John iii. 10.

my own spirit to this, is a consciousness that I love him, and therefore keep his words. But the languor of our affections, and imperfection of our obedience, make the witness of conscience alone but a dubious testimony; but this is seconded by the Spirit, who increases our love, by shewing more of the love of God as manifest in his word; hence we can say, (u) "Our hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts, by the holy Ghost." So that, by this witness we come to the conclusion, (w) "Whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: *hereby know we that we are in him.*" i. e. God hath compleated his redeeming love, by the work of his Spirit in us, the evidence of which is our obedience.

We may thus briefly represent this matter: The *fact to be proved*, is our being children of God. The *medium of proof*, is the work of faith, and labour of love. The *laws of the evidence*, are the scriptures of truth. The *witnesses*, are the Spirit of God, and our spirits, who join to testify that we are the sons of God.

The Spirit also gives an earnest of the heavenly inheritance, which is likewise given by the word; whereby is presented to the mind, a foretaste of future blessedness, or,

(u) Rom. v. 5.

(w) 1 John ii. 5.

“ the substance of the things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen.” This appears to be by the word. If we consider heaven as *perfect rest*; of this the Spirit gives a specimen, when (x) “ we that have *believed* do enter into rest;” as it is only in his word, he speaks peace to the guilty conscience, or joy to the troubled mind.

Again, if heaven be considered with respect to fellowship, as the general assembly and church of the first-born, a specimen of this also is communicated by the gospel; for the apostles wrote, and declared the things which they (y) had seen and heard, that others might have fellowship with them: and truly their Fellowship was with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.”

So of the seal of the Spirit, if we take it to mean the marking them for God’s property, or impressing the divine image, it is done (z) “ by that form of doctrine into which they have been delivered.”

But when our faith, hope and love, are proved to be genuine by their fruits, to which the Spirit bears witness; *May we not take comfort, from the consideration of their being of the right kind?* Yes; for the truth of faith does not consist in our manner of believing, but in the truth of what

(x) Heb. iv. 3.

(z) Rom. vi. 17.

(y) 1 John i. 3.

we believe; and every believer rejoiceth in the truth. So, if his hope is genuine, he rejoiceth in hope; because faithful is he that hath promised. And if his love be genuine, he rejoiceth in the real loveliness of him on whom his heart is fixed; for (a) "to them that believe he is precious." But, if by the right kind of faith, hope and love, was intended a distinction between our believing, and the things we believe, so as that we may be comforted from reflecting on the motions or tendency of our minds, separate from the truth; he that can get comfort from that, must certainly rejoice in a thing of nought. He that hears good tidings, rejoices in them, as they appear to him to be true, and suitable to his wants; and not from consideration of his believing them: though, if he did not receive them for true, he could have no joy or peace from them; for these come only from believing. He that hopes for some future good, is comforted from the consideration of the things hoped for, and the faithfulness of him that promised them; and not on account of the tendency of his mind: though, if he had no hope of them, the knowledge of their existence could give him no joy. Thus it is God's faithfulness we rest on, when we rejoice in hope of his

(a) 1 Pet. ii. 7.

glory. In like manner, love rejoiceth, not in itself, or its own motions, but in the excellency of its object. If we could suppose a believer to be comforted, by reflecting on any act of his mind, separate from the truth, that leaves no flesh room to glory in the divine presence; we must also admit, that he hath so far lost sight of the only ground of glorying, *viz.* “the cross of Christ;” and so far has confidence in the flesh. But the true character of a Christian is, (b) “We are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.” Nor can he, from first to last, find any other reason than sovereign grace, why it was given him in the behalf of Christ, to believe; while yet to others it is not given. This will excite his thankful astonishment, (c) “that he hath manifested himself to him, and not to the world:” and this, as often as he reflects on it, will cause him to say, Whence is this to me? While yet, all he sees of God’s word, and his own heart, serves to make him ashamed, and keep him dependent for strength, on the grace that is in Christ Jesus. (d) “As in him, he had boldness of access with confidence into this grace wherein he stands, so as to

(b) Phil. iii. 3.

(c) John xiv. 22.

(d) Ephes. iii. 12, and Rom. v. 2.

rejoice in hope of the glory of God," in his first believing; so he finds it necessary, to hold "the beginning of his confidence stedfast to the end." Nor can he find any conclusive evidence in his first believing, that he shall certainly persevere; but gladly suffers the word of exhortation, (e) "Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father." And thus it appears that we are Christ's house, (f) "If we hold fast the confidence, and the rejoicing of hope firm unto the end."

Thus it is evident, (g) "As the hope laid up for believers in heaven, is only heard of by the word of the truth of the gospel;" so it can be rejoiced in no longer than we (b) "continue in the faith, grounded and settled, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which we have heard." While this gospel stands true in the mind of any man, and so is his faith, he can never despair, nor be miserable; whereas he that seeks his comfort from the manner of believing, and not from the truth believed, will ever be perplexed to know whether he has performed the great work of believing

(e) 1 John ii. 24.

(g) Col. i. 5.

(f) Heb. iii. 6.

(b) Col. i. 23.

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in a right manner. And of consequence, the comfort he gets this way, must needs be of the same sort with his, who said, "God, I thank thee, I am not like other men;" &c. for it rises from something he has done, which others have not done; nor is the Pharisee behind them in thanking God for his assistance in that which made the difference.

Does the Spirit of God always bear witness with the Spirit of a believer, to the genuine fruits of faith, while it continues fruitful? Yes; for (k) "if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin." So "that the comforts of love keep pace with the fruits of faith;" and while he thus proves his own work, he has rejoicing in himself alone, and not in the good opinion another is bound to have of him. Therefore, when this testimony is withdrawn, it is a sure evidence and consequence of disobedience, and unfruitfulness; by which we have (l) "grieved the holy Spirit of God."

Suppose the faith be expressed thus, (m) "If God so loved us we ought also to love one another." The duty resulting from this, as the fruit and evidence of our

(k) 1 John i. 7.

(l) Ephes. iv. 30.

(m) 1 John iv. 11.

believing

believing it, will be, that we (n) “love not in word, nor in tongue, but in deed and in truth.” And hereby we shall know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him. For if our hearts condemn us, God is greater than our hearts, and knoweth all things. But if our hearts condemn us not, (as destitute of love for the truth’s sake) then have we confidence toward God.” Now, if hereby we know that we are of the truth, it follows, if that whereby we know it, fails, then the thing known before, becomes matter of suspicion, and fear. And as this privilege of rejoicing in hope, attends obedience to the truth, in doing what he hath commanded; so likewise in suffering according to the will of God: In which the Spirit of glory, and of God resteth upon them; so that they have (o) “taken joyfully the spoiling of their goods, knowing in themselves that they have in heaven a better and a more enduring substance.” For nothing can be a better proof of our belief of, and love to the truth, than our suffering all things for its sake, that we may be partakers thereof. This, Paul expresses for the consolation of the *Philippians*, calling it, (p) “an evident token of their salva-

(n) 1 John iii. 18—21.

(o) Heb. x. 34.

(p) Phil. i. 28.

tion.”

tion.” “Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel. Stand fast in one Spirit, with one mind, striving together for the faith of the gospel; and in nothing terrified by your adversaries: which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God.” So that, both in doing and suffering, the obedient Christian findeth that the “ways of wisdom, are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths peace:” for (q) “as the sufferings of Christ aboundeth in him; so his consolation also aboundeth by Christ.”

From the view now taken of the work of the holy Spirit, we may conclude two things.

1. That nothing ought to be concluded to be a saving work of the Spirit, that does not produce the fruits of the Spirit. When *Isaiah* describes the spread of that gospel “that is mighty, through God, to pull down strong-holds, casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;” he tells us, (r) “The lofty looks of men shall be humbled, and

(q) 2 Cor. i. 5.

(r) Isa. ii. 10—18.

the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day, and the idols shall be utterly abolished."

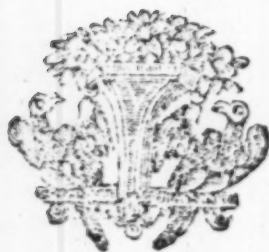
And we may say, when pride of wisdom, or pride of devotion, alienate the mind from the atonement, the Lord alone is not exalted; nor the idols of those that are under such influence, utterly abolished. Nor can any pretensions to devotion and zeal, possibly flow from a work of the Spirit of God, in such as "do not through the Spirit mortify the deeds of the body."

2. We may also conclude, that our danger does by no means arise from suspicion of our state, but from presumption about it. It is very natural for men to catch at any thing that gives them ease, peace, or pleasure; and to admire those that minister any thing to promote them. But, the many cautions and warnings with which the scriptures abound, shew, as well as experience, that men are ready to profess they know God, while in works they deny him; and therefore charge us to look diligently lest we fail of the grace of God, and to "take heed lest there be in any of us an evil heart of unbelief, &c." God keeps his people from falling by fear.

Now

Now unto him that is able to keep us from falling, and to present us faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. *Amen.*

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